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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 001060

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EUR/NCE FOR ERIC FICHTE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/27/2016

TAGS: PREL IR LE MARR MOPS SY XG EZ

SUBJECT: CZECHS COMMIT AID TO LEBANON, TROOPS UNDER  
CONSIDERATION

REF: A. STATE 139903

- 1B. STATE 136196
- 1C. PRAGUE 898
- 1D. PRAGUE 966
- 1E. PRAGUE 806
- 1F. PRAGUE 921
- 1G. PRAGUE 944
- 1H. PRAGUE 1049

Classified By: Political-Economic Counselor Mike Dodman  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary and comment. The Czechs have continued to indicate a willingness to support the U.S. position throughout the Lebanon/Israel crisis, and are now committed to providing aid to Lebanon. The Czech MFA confirmed on August 28 that the Czechs will offer \$1 million for Lebanon at the Stockholm Donors Conference. They have also agreed not to send Czech officials to Syria or Iran. On UNIFIL, the MFA favors contributing a small contingent of troops, which would be subject to the approval of the new Czech government when formed. However MOD sources indicate the ministry will argue against a deployment due budgetary constraints and existing deployments. End summary and comment.

12. (C) Polec Counselor and Poloff met with MFA Director of the Middle East and Africa Miloslav Stasek on August 28 to discuss Czech assistance to Lebanon (Ref A), and deliver Ref 1B. Stasek noted the Czechs were among the first countries to send aid to Lebanon, and currently plan to pledge \$1 million (22 million Czech Crowns (CZK)) for humanitarian aid at the Stockholm Donors Conference on August 31. The breakdown for the aid is as follows: \$227,000 (5 million CZK) for immediate relief, \$454,000 (10 million CZK) for a medevac program (Ref C), and \$318,000 (7 million CZK) for Czech NGOs to provide reconstruction and humanitarian relief. Stasek said this amount is not a firm commitment, as the incoming Czech parliament must approve it. He also said the Czechs are studying additional ways to support Lebanon.

13. (C) Stasek said the MFA has recommended in favor of contributing troops to the EU mission to UNIFIL, unless doing so would impact existing troop commitments in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Balkans (Ref D). He said that the MOD is also evaluating the commitment issue, and warned that expected cuts to the MOD's 2006 budget could affect the Czechs' ability to commit troops. He added the Czechs are concerned about the challenge of disarming Hezbollah, and therefore the terms of the mandate could affect the final decision. However MOD sources indicate that their ministry will argue against such a deployment. (Note: previously planned Czech troop rotations in Afghanistan and Kosovo will

soon slightly reduce the total number of Czech troops deployed in foreign missions, strengthening the suggestion that the Czechs will at least numerically have the capacity to field at least a company for UNIFIL. End note.)

¶4. (C) Stasek said the Syrian Ambassador in Prague has already urged the Czechs to visit Damascus, but he agreed to the U.S. request to continue diplomatic isolation on Iran and Syria by not sending delegations to either country.

¶5. (C) Comment. The Czechs have been strong supporters of U.S. efforts in the region since the conflict began. Operating within the EU, the Czechs took a tough stand in support of Israel during the debate on the GAERC conclusions on the conflict (Ref E). The Czechs supported the negotiations that resulted in UNSCR 1701 (Ref F). In addition, as a member of the UNHRC, the Czechs opposed the recent Arab Group-sponsored resolutions that condemned Israel (Ref G-H). Post believes the Czechs will continue to look for ways to support the Lebanese people while remaining a strong ally of Israel, both within the EU and on a bilateral basis. To the extent possible, the Czechs will also work within the UNHRC to ensure a more balanced and responsible approach to the humanitarian crisis in the region. End comment.

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